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Cross Cultural Study About College Adjustment Study of China & Indonesian College Students:” How Coping Strategies Help Social Adjustment”

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Abstract.

Many studies indicate that study in university bring a big experience for emerging adult, because of the transition. Many factors contributes to the quality of adjustment, it could came from the internal and external. Abdullah, etl. (2010) found that coping strategies had significant and positive correlations with overall university adjustment. According to the preliminary survey, social adjustment usually became the most difficult one. So, the aim of this study is to investigate the correlation between coping strategies and students college adjustment (social adjustment) and the differences of cross cultural conditions between Indonesian and Chinese students. This study is quantitative methods using two instruments, which are Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ, Baker & Syrik, 1984,1989) and The Ways of Coping Questionnaire (WCQ) adapted from Folkman and Lazarus, 1988). Subjects in this study are 20 Indonesian students and 20 Chinese students.

The study found only Engagement Coping Strategies have significant correlation with Social Adjustment. Problem Focused, Emotional Focused and Disengagement Coping Strategies have no significant correlation with Social Adjustment. Indonesian and Chinese students were different significantly in Problem and Emotional Focused Coping Strategy, and Engagement Coping Strategies. Some cultural differences in relationship and entry programme in each university assumed to play role in these differences.

Keywords: Social Adjustment, College Students, Cross Cultural, Coping Strategies

INTRODUCTION

Becoming college student will be the time of transition in one's life. The transition includes new relationship with friends, greater personal freedom from the parents and teachers, and new form of study activities. Greater personal freedom in any aspect of life as a college student demands abilities to live on their own for the first time. It means that they will gain independence and take charge of the many choices and decisions compare to the past times.

From the preliminary survey with some students, using interview with Indonesian and China students (N = 58) found that making relationships become the most frequent problem for college adjustment. The result of the preliminary surveys are listed below

Table 1
Problems in College Adjustment

No	Problems Adjustment	Frequency	Percentage
1	Making new friends	16	27,6%
2	Low acceptance from environment	3	5,2%
3	No confidence in with new social environment	6	10,3%
4	Miss old environment	3	5,2%
5	Difficulties in communication (differences in language, dialect, etc.)	13	22,4%
6	Difficulties to remember new things	11	19%
7	Instability in emotion	3	5,2%
8	No problems at all	3	5,2%

From the table 1, we know that the social dimensions of college adjustment could be the most frequent problems among college students. It seemed that even in academic things, the social dimension of adjustment also affect such as in team work while doing assignments, communication with lecturer, doing the presentation in class, etc.

According to Crow (in Shalini, C. V. L. V, 2006) adjustment is the behavior to build connection with the environment and changing the attitude of the individu. Al-nanni (2005, dalam Al-khatib, Awamleh, Samawi, 2012) stated that the behavior is the way to fill the need of the individu and relief the stress to achieve balance. Sufian (2004, dalam Al-khatib, Awamleh, Samawi, 2012) mentioned that adjustment is the individual's abilities to fill the psychological needs and self acceptance so there are no conflict with the social activities. So in adjustment, there were effort to balancing the self needs and the conditions of external/reality and when the person could manage it successfully than it bring satisfaction for the individu.

Success in adjustment among college students depend on the coping strategies they use to solve their problems. Coping is a cognitive and behavior effort to balance the specific demand from internal and external (Folkman, et al., 1986). Aspinwall & Taylor (1992, in Abdullah, Elias, Uli & Mahyuddin, 2010) using 672 students found that active coping strategies brought positive impact to college adjustment and avoidant coping brought negative college adjustment. Park & Adler (2003, in Abdullah, Elias, Uli & Mahyuddin, 2010) found that escape avoidance contribute to lower psychological well-being, and *positive reappraisal* contribute to positive psychological well-being. Dyson dan Renk (2006, in Abdullah, Elias, Uli & Mahyuddin, 2010) added that *escape avoidance* among college students correlated with higher depression.

From the preliminary survey using 58 students, we found that when students were in stress related to

Table 2. Ways of manage stress among College Students

No	Ways to handle stress	Frequency	Percentage
1	Watching DVD/Television	7	8,05 %
2	Reading novel or comics	4	4,60 %
3	Doing negative things (drinking alcohol, heavy smoking, self mutilation)	1	1,15 %
4	Having fun with friends	1	1,15 %
5	Sleeping	15	17,24 %
6	Drinking coffee	1	1,15 %
7	Eating	11	12,64 %
8	Playing games	7	8,06 %
9	Playing music	3	3,45 %
10	Listening to the music	6	6,90 %
11	Self isolating for reflection	7	8,06 %
12	Telling and discussion with friends and or family	9	10,35 %
13	Going out	4	4,60 %
14	Praying	5	5,75 %
15	Doing hobbies and nice things	6	6,9 %

problems (academics or non academics) they tend to handle or manage it by using their personal choice's of activities as listed in table 2 below.

According to the table 2 above, it seemed that ways of handle stress among college students tend to the activities to physical and negative emotional feeling release tension.

Lazarus in general divided the ways of coping strategies into two; Problem focused coping and Emotional focused coping. Other theories mentioned more specifically varieties of ways of coping strategies, such as Confrontive Coping, Distancing, Self-Controlling, Seeking Social Support, Accepting Responsibility, Escape-Avoidance, Planful Problem Solving, and Positive Reappraisal.

Pritchard, Wilson & Yamnitz (2007), from their study found that using the emotional focused coping correlated to negative psychological impact. But in the study of Abdullah, Elias, Uli & Mahyuddin (2010) found that both coping strategies, emotional and problem, could solve the problems effectively among college students, depends on the kind of stress or problems they faced.

This study want to know further about the correlation of Problem focused coping and Emotional focused coping to the Social Adjustment among College Students. Moreover, the uniquely cultural differences and specifically of the advisory programme from the university will also like to probe further in their contribute to the Social Adjustment among Chinese and Indonesian College Students.

Methods

Subjects

In this study, we use 40 subjects which were University Students, 20 from Zhejiang University and 20 from University of Surabaya, from the year 1 – 3, and age 18-23 years old. From Zhejiang University, we got the data from 12 departement : Biology, Math, Chemistry, Energy, Polymer Science, Physics, Japanese, National Defence, Engineering, Material, Archaeology, and from University of Surabaya we got data from Engineering, Bussiness and Economics, Pharmacy, Psychology, Law, Technobiology, and Creative Industrial.

Measurements

In this study, the Social Adjustment among College Students were measured by using the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ), only Social Adjustment Aspect, adaptation from Baker and Siryk (1986). It contains 20 items, with 1-9 scales. The Coping Strategies were measured by using the *Coping Strategy Inventory* yang diadaptasi dari Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis & Gruen (1986) “*Ways of Coping Questionnaire (WCQ)*”. It contains 24 items, with 1-5 scales. The Coping Strategies

Inventory divided in Problem and Emotional focused coping strategies, both engagement and disengagement. The engagement problem coping strategies are *problem solving*, *cognitive restructuring*, and the disengagement problem focused are *problem avoidance*, *wishful thinking*. The engagement emotional focused coping are *express emotion*, *social support*, and the disengagement emotional focused coping are *self criticism*, and *social withdrawal*.

Data Analysis

Analysis data were using SPSS for Windows Version 16, for the correlation test and differences test by using T-test for levene's test.

RESULT

Correlation of Coping Strategies and Social Adjustment

In this study, coping strategies are divided into Problem Focused and Emotional Focused, both have the engagement and disengagement varieties. The engagement coping strategies are the effective, positive ways of coping strategies. The disengagement coping strategies are the in-effective, negative ways of coping strategies. From data analysis found the specific results of each correlation with social adjustment among university students as listed below in the table 3.

From the data above it found that Engagement Coping Strategies, either Problem Focused or Emotional Focused, have significant correlation with Social Adjustment. Coping strategies which are disengagement, either Problem Focused or Negative Focused, have no significant correlation with Social Adjustment.

Neither Problem nor Emotional Focused Coping have no significant correlation with Social Adjustment. **Social Adjustment among University Students**

From the data analysis, the comparison of social adjustment among university students between Indonesian dan Chinese Students showed no significant differences, $t = 1.272$, $p > 0.05$. Mean for Indonesian students = 119.70, and Chinese students = 112.55.

Table 3 Correlation of Coping Strategies and Social Adjustment

	R	Sig
Correlation of Engagement Coping Strategies and Social Adjustment	0.367	< 0.05
Correlation of Disengagement Coping Strategies and Social Adjustment	-0.047	> 0.05
Correlation of Problem Focused Coping and Social Adjustment	0.107	> 0.05
Correlation of Emotional Focused Coping and Social Adjustment	0.309	> 0.05

Differences in Coping Strategies of Indonesian and Chinese Students

There are significant differences in Problem and Emotional Focused Coping Strategy, between Indonesian and Chinese students. The Indonesian students' coping strategies got higher level than the Chinese students.

There are significant differences in Engagement Coping Strategy, but not in Disengagement Coping

Strategy, between Indonesian and Chinese students. For Engagement Coping Strategy, the Indonesian students' coping strategies got higher level than the Chinese students.

DISCUSSION

Correlation of Coping Strategies and Social Adjustment



From the data above it found that Engagement Coping Strategies, either Problem Focused or Emotional

Focused, have significant correlation with Social

Table 4. Comparison in Coping Strategies between Indonesian & Chinese Students

Comparison Indonesian & Chinese Students	T	Sig	Mean Indonesian Students	Mean Chinese Students
Comparison in Problem Focused Coping Strategies	5.025	< 0.05	37.45	33.3
Comparison in Emotional Focused Coping Strategies	4.013	< 0.05	37	31.9
Comparison in Engagement Focused Coping Strategies	5.690	< 0.05	41	33.6
Comparison in Disengagement Focused Coping Strategies	1.361	> 0.05	33.45	31.6

Adjustment. Coping strategies which are disengagement, either Problem Focused or Negative Focused, have no significant correlation with Social Adjustment.

It means for adaptation with social environment, the ways of coping strategies that engagement such as problem solving, cognitive structuring, express emotion, and social support will contribute significantly. The engagement coping strategies, either problem or emotional focused, have the same characteristics which are direct relating to the situation/condition, focused to the stressful situation itself or individual's emotional reaction to the stressful situation. The direct characteristics of ways of coping seems effectively contribute to the process of social adjustment. Leong, Bonz, & Zachar (1997, in Gall, et al.) mentioned that active coping was predictive of both personal/emotional and academic adjustment for college students. Baum, Calesnick, Davis, & Gatchell (1982, in Gall, et al.) also found that college students who used a more active coping strategy such as structuring or prioritizing social events experienced fewer negative effect of a high density dormitory situation.

On the other hand, the disengagement coping strategies which characterized with avoidance, isolation from the situation/condition have no significant relations to social adjustment. It means that with disengagement way of coping such as avoidance, wishful thinking could not predict the social adjustment. It might be better, but it might be worst too.

Other findings from this study showed that, neither Problem nor Emotional Focused Coping Strategies, have no significant correlation with Social Adjustment. It means that both Problem or Emotional Focused Coping Strategies were not related to the condition of social adjustment. This findings showed that the types of coping strategies, either focused on the problem or focused on the emotional reaction, have random opportunities to be predictors for successful social adjustment because every obstacles in adaptation to social environment have unique demands. The right coping strategies to handle or manage situation should connect with the characteristics of the problem it self. So problem and emotional focused coping strategies

could not be the predictor for successful or failed social adjustment. This findings is the same with the findings of Abdullah, Elias, Uli & Mahyuddin (2010) found that both coping strategies, emotional and problem, could solve the problems effectively among college students, depends on the kind of stress or problems they faced.

Social Adjustment among University Students

This study found that there are no significant differences in Social Adjustment between Indonesian and Chinese students. According to the mean score from both, Indonesian and Chinese, it is in the average level. In University of Surabaya, for the new entry students they have special programme which gave them the opportunities to get all the informations they need to prepare for the face the demands, challenges in academic lives. They also get chance to make new friends by this programme, since there were many varieties group activities in fun ways. Students from China, they also have the orientation programme that give informations about their academic programme and also added with the military programme. These programme make both Indonesian and Chinese students get along with the social adjustment.

Differences in Coping Strategies of Indonesian and Chinese Students

The Indonesian students engagement coping strategies differ significantly from the Chinese students. And from the mean score the Indonesian students get higher score than Chinese students. These differences might came from the differences in climate in each university lives. The relationship the students have in the University of Surabaya with lecturers more personal, so if there is some problems it is common to come and talk about it with the lecturers. For Chinese students, their relations with lecturers were more formal.

Other resources that students in Indonesia have for handling problems came from the parents, and families. On the other hand, for Chinese students, when they became university students, they move and live separately from their parents because mostly of them stayed at the dormitory. Therefore their resources for coping strategies were more limited, compare to Indonesian students. From these resources for coping strategies such as from lecturers, parents, families might



enrich the coping strategies for Indonesian students. They could discuss, ask, observe and learn by modelling their resources in the proses of social adjustment. The more open, friendly relationship the stronger support individu got from their social environment. That's could be the explanation of the significant differences between Indonesian and Chinese students in Engagement, Problem and Emotional focused coping strategies.

Summaries and Recommendations

From this study, we found that Engagement Coping Strategies have significant correlation with Social Adjustment among university students. But the Disengagement, Problem Focused and Emotional Focused were not correlated significantly with Social

Adjustment. Each problems, obstacles in the process of adaptation to the environment need specific ways of coping strategies, but the problems, obstacles need direct, no escape, no postponed action in other words engagement ways to handle it.

Indonesian students from University of Surabaya got higher level of coping strategies, in Engagement and Problem Focused ways, than Chinese students. It assumed that differences in contents of entry/orientation programme, and social relationships climate in each university play major role.

For further study it recommend to enlarge the numbers of sample and study other aspects of cultural differences such as value of friendships, teamwork, etc.

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